



A Planning Guide for Funerals at
Covenant Presbyterian Church
Sherman, TX

Brothers and Sisters,

The death of a loved one is a time filled with pain and sorrow. We at CPC want to make sure we are supporting you in every possible way as you grieve, and as we remember God's promises for us all. Especially at death we remember God's claim upon us - a claim sealed at our baptism, a claim that surrounds us our earthly life and beyond. Death is not the end. Death does not have the final say. Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection, demonstrates to us God's ultimate power. Alleluia! Alleluia!

The purpose of this resource guide is twofold. It is offered as a tool to those in the midst of grief, to offer guidance to families as you meet with pastors and talk together about the way we worship God and celebrate the life of someone you love. It is also offered to begin a conversation - between you, your family, and the church - about those things you value most in life and in death as we celebrate a service of witness to the resurrection. As we have sought to live faithfully, so we must also want to plan faithfully for our memorial service that we may honor the God who keeps "our going out and coming in" forever.

If you would like us to keep your thoughts on file at the church, please read this booklet and complete the death wishes form included in the booklet. When you have considered your choices, call to schedule a brief appointment with a pastor to share your wishes and create your file. We hope it will help you and your family to know we want to honor your wishes as we celebrate our lives of discipleship.

It is a privilege for us to walk with you through this journey.

Grace and peace, Lisa Perkins Pastor, CPC

WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

A Planning Guide to Services at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Sherman, Texas

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians affirm with tears and joy the hope of the Gospel even in the face of death. Because of the incarnation of God coming to earth as Jesus Christ we affirm that we are not alone, that God is present with us, that God calls us into communities to worship and serve. We must not bear grief alone, but are sustained by the power of the Spirit and community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.

We are called to be faithful as we claim God's promises in all areas of our lives, even as we think about our death, and the death of our loved ones. Planning in advance for our death, especially for the way the community commends us to God's loving care, can be a gift we can give to those we love. The pastor will direct the service of worship, which generally includes scripture, music, prayers, the proclamation of God's power over death, and words of remembrance of the deceased. Members of the family may say words of reflection with no more than three reflections being offered. It ends with the commendation of the one who has died to the care of the eternal God and bears witness to faith in the resurrection from the dead.

The time of death is emotional, stressful, and filled with decisions. The purpose of this guide is not to complete every detail, but to help begin a conversation between you, your family, and the church about what is important to you. After you have read this information ask your questions by contacting the Covenant Presbyterian pastor to discuss your questions and decisions.

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

An appointment with a funeral home/mortuary counselor can help you decide what you and your family need from the many services available. The funeral home can coordinate details about transportation to and from services, visitations, preparation of obituary for newspapers, completion of appropriate documents, and arrangements with the cemetery or memorial garden.

Please contact Covenant Presbyterian Church if you plan to use the sanctuary for the service of worship. Cemeteries throughout the area will also provide you with tours and plot purchase information, or you may already have a family plot elsewhere.

THE SERVICE

A Service of Witness to the Resurrection, often called a Funeral or Memorial Service, is a worship service and should be comforting to those who mourn as well as bear witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. The concern of gathered friends does minister to our grief, but above all else, a Funeral is a service of worship to God. The Book of Order gives these guidelines: "The Funeral should be a service of worship in which God's people witness to their faith in the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting, and in which also assurance of God's love and salvation in Christ is ministered especially to the bereaved." Since a Funeral is a service of worship, all that takes place should be consistent with this principle.

The Location of the Service.

It is appropriate to have the Funeral or Memorial Service in the church. It is in the church that we are baptized and married. It is here we make promises as we baptize children. It is here the congregation worships week by week. Here we open our lives to the Lord, find forgiveness, take the bread and the cup, and join with our families and friends in a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is most fitting to recognize the end of our earthly life and celebrate our resurrection to eternal life in this same place.

TYPE OF SERVICE

The following are types of services most used in our church and community.

- **The Service of Witness to the Resurrection** is the primary worship service held a few days after death or for memorial services at the time most convenient for the family, often in the Sanctuary at the church. One important decision is whether you choose a Memorial Service or a Funeral Service. At a Memorial Service the body is not present. A Service of Committal has either preceded the Memorial Service or will take place at a later time. A Funeral Service is a service where the body is present either in a casket or an urn. Usually the Funeral Service is concluded with a Service of Committal at the burial site. When a casket is present, it shall be closed. Having a loved one cremated does not necessarily preclude the body being present at the Funeral Service, unless a Service of Committal immediately precedes or follows. The pastor can help you understand the Funeral Service, Memorial Service and Service of Committal if you are unsure of what service you and your loved one would like.

- **The Service of Committal (often referred to as a Graveside Service)** occurs at the interment site where the remains of the deceased are laid to rest. It is usually brief. If no other service (Memorial or Funeral) is held, the Service of Committal may take a longer form. You are welcome to be in conversation with the pastor about whether the committal occurs before or after the worship service.

THE SERVICE

Order of Worship

The service is based on the Lord's Day Service as outlined in the Presbyterian Church Book of Order. A Funeral or Memorial Service in the Reformed tradition usually follows this order of worship:

- Organ Preludes
- Greeting with Words of Scripture
- Call to Worship
- Hymn
- Unison reading of Psalm 23
- Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments
- Homily and Celebration of Life
- Hymn
- Prayers of Thanksgiving, Supplication, and Intercession
- The Lord's Prayer
- Commendation
- Closing Hymn
- Benediction
- Closing Voluntary

THE SERVICE (cont.)

Scripture to be used. Favorite Scriptures of the deceased are always appropriate. For assistance in choosing Scripture, see the following list. It is not an exhaustive list and a supplemental scripture and hymn recommendations are also provided at the end. The pastor may choose for you if you prefer.

Old Testament

Job 19:23-27

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Isaiah 40:1-11

Isaiah 40:28-31

Isaiah 65:17-25

Psalms

Psalms 23

Psalms 46:1-5, 10-11

Psalms 90:1-10, 12

Psalms 103

Psalms 121

Psalms 130

Epistles

Romans 8:31-39

Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44 50, 53-58

2 Corinthians 4:16 – 5:1

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Revelation 21:1-4, 22-25, 23:3-5

Gospel

Matthew 18:1-5

Luke 23:33, 39-43

John 11:17-27

John 14:1-6, 25-27

THE SERVICE (cont.)

Music. The music for a Funeral or Memorial Service shall be sacred music that is appropriate for a service of worship at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Our Minister of Music will provide music for the service in consultation with the pastor. Soloists and additional musicians may be requested through the pastor.

For assistance in choosing hymns see the following list. This list is not exhaustive. Please be in touch with our pastor for all hymn selections. All hymns will ordinarily be chosen from the Presbyterian Glory to God Hymnal. We welcome conversations about music or guest musicians that would be special to your family, understanding that these things can be hard to accommodate with limited preparation time.

HYMNS APPROPRIATE FOR MEMORIAL SERVICES

Opening Hymns (or these may be placed elsewhere in the service). A psalm or hymn of praise is appropriate at the beginning of the service. The family may select from the following list or others from the Glory to God Hymnal.

- Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
- Come, Christians, Join to Sing
- Rejoice, the Lord is King
- The King of Love My Shepherd Is
- The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want
- My Shepherd Will Supply My Need
- The Lord's My Shepherd, All My Need

Hymn Suggestions (cont.)

- God is Our Refuge and Our Strength
- God, Our Help and Constant Refuge
- Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
- I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes
- I'll Praise My Maker
- A Mighty Fortress is Our God
- God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us
- God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand
- Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
- God of Our Life
- Great is Thy Faithfulness
- O God, Our Faithful God
- Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
- If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee
- Give to the Winds Thy Fears
- How Firm a Foundation
- I Sing a Song of the Saints of God
- Jesus, Priceless Treasure
- Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
- O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
- When We are Living
- Christ is Made the Sure Foundation
- Come Sing, O Church, in Joy!

Hymn Suggestions (cont.)

- The Church's One Foundation
- Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones
- I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art
- Holy God, We Praise Your Name
- How Great Thou Art
- Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
- Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty
- The God of Abraham Praise
- Now Thank We All Our God

Closing Hymns / Hymns focusing on the resurrection and/or eternal life

(these may be placed elsewhere in the service as well)

Easter hymns, affirming the resurrection, are appropriate especially at the end of the service. This is also a good place to include funeral hymns, which are specific to the occasion and which affirm a life well lived.

Some suggestions are:

- Christ is Risen! Shout Hosanna!
- Christ is Alive!
- Christ is Risen
- The Day of Resurrection!

Closing Hymns (cont.)

- The Strife is O'er
- Thine is the Glory
- God is My Strong Salvation
- Live Into Hope
- Lift High the Cross
- Lead On, O King Eternal
- We Know That Christ is Raised
- For All the Saints
- Near to the Heart of God
- Give Thanks for Life
- Lord of the Living
- O Lord of Life, Where'er They Be
- Abide With Me
- Day Is Done

EXPENSES TO THE FAMILY

For church members, there are no charges for use of the church's facilities or for the services of the pastor. Costs to the family related to the Memorial or Funeral Service will be for musicians or soloists the family may request. Our organist/pianist's fee is \$200.00.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

If friends and loved ones wish to designate a memorial that reflects the interest of the deceased, our church offers numerous opportunities for gifts to existing funds. Each contributor and the family receives acknowledgement of any memorial gift. This is an important stewardship opportunity, so that you or your loved one's ministry may live on, far beyond their physical presence among us. If you have questions about memorial gifts please discuss this with the pastor.